

**A COMPARITIVE STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN URBAN LOW
COST HOUSING ON THE WELL-BEING OF RESIDENTS IN KLANG AND SHAH ALAM,
MALAYSIA**

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Abstract

Housing in urban areas is blessed with available facilities for residents to choose from; may that be for education, grocery shopping, eating, recreation, praying, medical services and others. Residents can choose to go to any of these facilities for their needs and wants. There is however some variance in the choice of facilities in different housing areas yet the availability of facilities has to some degree an effect on the satisfaction of residents towards their housing environment. As Johnston (2000) defined in The Dictionary of Human Geography, 'housing as a sustainable entity provides houses, infrastructure, amenities and social facilities that are important to the development of human growth such as education, health, economic and recreation'. This paper revolves around the findings of a research relating to the level of satisfaction of residents in low cost flats towards the availability and accessibility of facilities. There are a selection of five locations of low cost flats in Shah Alam and three locations in Klang. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to approach this study. Survey data were analysed through the SPSS program and also by the Grounded Theory Analysis. The findings will show that the factors of availability and accessibility of facilities plays an important role in the level of satisfaction of these residents. Findings will also show that that the respondents in Shah Alam are more satisfied compared to those in Klang towards the community facilities domain in their housing area. In general, it can be concluded that residents living in Shah Alam has a higher level of well-being than in Klang where community facilities domain is concerned.

Keywords: Community Facilities, Low Cost Housing, Satisfaction, Well-being, Residents

1. INTRODUCTION

The housing environment is an important living domain for human beings. The life of a person is tied to the house he lives in. The house represent a shelter from outside elements, gives a status symbol to the owner, becomes an asset for the buyer and give the role of a neighbour or a member of a community to the resident. Housing constitutes a big economic sector that generates income for the country and building houses provide employment to many people from the labourer to the developer. Therefore housing has many functions in a society and also a definite role in promoting the well-being of the residents who live, work and play in it. Housing consists of the physical components and the social components. The physical components include the houses, facilities and

utilities while the social components include the families, neighbours and the community. For the purpose of this paper, only the community facilities component will become the focus of discussions.

2. THE CONCEPT OF WELL-BEING IN HOUSING

The concept of well-being in housing can be approached from the town planning point of view. In essence, town planning is an art and science of shaping the built environment we live in with the objective of creating a comfortable, safe, convenient and healthy living environment. For this purpose planning for housing is best approached at the neighbourhood level. The neighbourhood is a planned housing unit that provides for almost everything a person want and need. There are provisions for houses, infrastructure, utilities, green parks, schools, shops, places of worship, some places of employment, clinics and other social and public facilities. These provisions in a neighbourhood unit is planned to promote the well-being of the residents. There are several ideas that encouraged planning at the neighbourhood level and the most classical one is the 'Garden City' concept by Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928). The ideas of Howard and other classical concepts from Clarence Perry (1910), Le Corbusier (1923) and Clarence Stein (1928) can be found in the writings of Ratcliffe (1981).

It is very clear that housing plays an important role in providing quality of life to people. Housing is central to the everyday life of human beings, being the core of social, cultural, community and economic activity. MacCall (1975) stated the best way of approaching quality of life measurement is to measure the extent to which people's 'happiness requirements' are met – i.e. those requirements which are a necessary (although not sufficient) condition of anyone's happiness – those without which no member of the human race can be happy. What then constitute happiness? Aristotle the Greek philosopher claimed that happiness as being the ultimate end of man. Happiness in all its degree is good and there is nothing more valuable than happiness. Happiness expresses itself in moral virtues (courage, temperance, liberality, magnanimity, love

of honour, mildness, truthfulness, friendship and the higher of them all justice) and also manifests itself in intellectual virtues (Sharif 1963). From the viewpoint of Islam, happiness is the feeling that resides in the heart. It is characterized by peace of mind, tranquillity, a sense of well being, and a relaxed disposition. It comes as a result of proper behaviour, both inward and outward, and is inspired by strong faith (Science ISLAM). Therefore it can be summarized that the needs and wants of people living in a neighbourhood must be provided in order to make them happy yet happiness or the feeling of satisfaction depends on the feelings or perceptions of the residents living in the neighbourhood. Since happiness is intangible therefore the approach to measure the well-being of the residents is through the opinions, feelings or perceptions of satisfaction of the people living in the neighbourhood.

3. LOW COST HOUSING POLICY IN MALAYSIA

During the nineteenth century most of the developed countries saw the majority of their populations move from the country to the towns and cities causing rapid urbanisation. In the developing world scenario, for reasons of pressure as well as attraction, people had flocked to their cities in their hundreds or millions. These cities try to cope with the provisions of housing and facilities to the urban settlers but this phenomenon is sometimes an impossible task to tackle. The migrants to the city and urban centres were the new pool of workers needed in the manufacturing sector but they became victim to the lack of accommodation and affordable housing in these places.

The provision of low-cost housing was not explicitly mentioned as an objective in the First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970), it was duly stressed that one of the major efforts of the government is to promote the welfare of the lower-income group. Then with the introduction of the NEP in 1971, housing programmes was undertaken by both public and private sectors directed towards meeting the specific needs of the population. The effort to improve the life quality of the poor was seen in the Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysian Plan (1971-1975) which points

out that the provision of low-cost housing is aimed directly at improving the living conditions of the urban poor. In the Third Malaysia Plan, public housing programs focussed mainly on low-cost, the construction of houses in land settlement schemes and the continuing provision of staff quarters. However, the provision for adequate and affordable housing for the lower income group was a top agenda in the Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-1985) and the government included the involvement of the private sector in ensuring an adequate supply of low cost housing for the country. Under the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990), the low cost housing policy stresses not only the need to eradicate poverty but also to create new Malay urban communities which are active in the national economy. The housing policy under the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995) still emphasized the development of the low income housing based on the human settlement concept and the continuation of the New Economic Policy. However a new policy of privatisation of public low-cost housing was introduced to solve the housing for the poor and lower income group. The low-cost housing policy in the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000) announced a new strategy to resolve the low-cost housing needs of the country by emphasizing the role of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) to undertake massive low and medium cost housing projects throughout the country. The Third Outline Perspective Plan (OPP3) 2001-2010 was drafted to assist and facilitate efforts in improving the quality of life for the Malaysian people stating that its citizens will enjoy and optimise available opportunities including education, employment and social facilities. The Plan also state that the government will take effort to ensure wider coverage of improved social facilities for all households. Under the Eighth Malaysian Plan, (2001-2005), the government wants to undertake a programme to upgrade and improve the low cost public housing to ensure that the buildings, common facilities and other public amenities are well maintained. The housing programme will emphasize the safety, health, convenience and a conducive living environment. And in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), housing development will focus on adequate, quality and affordable housing for sale or rent, for all Malaysians, especially those in

the low and middle income groups. Among others, the implementation of the low cost housing program will be expedited in the final phase of the Ninth Malaysia Plan with the additional construction of 18,500 *Program Perumahan Rakyat* (PPR) units for rent. Furthermore, 12,300 units under the *Rumah Mampu Milik* program will be built by 2010.

In summary, the low cost housing programme in Malaysia is one of the top agendas in all the Malaysia Economic Plans in that the government wants the housing development to focus on adequate, quality and affordable housing. The Government wants housing for the low income earners emphasizes safety, health, convenience with ample provision of social facilities (Seventh and Eighth Malaysia Plan).

4. THE STUDY AREA: SHAH ALAM AND KLANG

Shah Alam and Klang are two cities located in the prosperous Klang Valley in the state of Selangor which has the second highest urban population in Malaysia. According to the 2000 population census, the urban population in Klang is 631,676 persons. It is geographically located south-west from the city of Kuala Lumpur by the coast. Klang is made up of a town area and a port known as Port Klang. The town is mainly divided into two; the old town which contains much of the past history of Klang and the newer part which has undergone vast improvements and massive development. Klang is also famous for being the royal town for the State. Between 1974 and 1977, Klang was the capital of Selangor when Kuala Lumpur became a Federal Territory and before Shah Alam was made the capital of Selangor. It was in 1977 when Klang Municipal Council was formed with a total area of 60.9 square kilometers. Klang has not yet been granted the city status but geographically, by virtue of the size of its population, Klang can be considered as a city. Shah Alam, the first planned new town in Malaysia was developed in 1963, formerly known as Sungai Renggam (later as Batu Tiga) with mostly with rubber and palm oil estates. Its current name was chosen by the then Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, after his late father Sultan Alam Shah. On 7th December 1978, through the proclamation of the late His Royal Highness Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz

Al Haj, the 8th Sultan of Selangor, Shah Alam has been declared as the new state capital of Selangor. The city was granted city status on 10 October 2000. In the 2000 Malaysian Census, the urban population of Shah Alam is estimated to be 319,612 persons. On October 10, 2000, the local council was upgraded from a municipal council to a city council known as the Shah Alam City Council (SACC).

The study area of Klang and Shah Alam is focused specifically on the low cost flats in and around the city centre irrespective of whether they are built by the private, public or a joint venture sector. They may be of a five storey walk-up flats or higher level flats with elevators. The locations of low cost flats in Klang are further away from the city centre because they were built much later after the land around the city was fully developed during the early years. The flats in Shah Alam are located near to the city centre because they were planned from the start to house the factory workers working in the industrial areas around Shah Alam. The cities of Klang and Shah Alam have their own unique histories and functions yet they also have similar characteristics such as heterogeneous population, high commercial activity, active housing industry and relatively good transportation system.

5. METHODOLOGY

The research into well-being of residents is approached by the qualitative methods and analysis and there are three types of surveys were carried out to gather information and data. For this study the surveys are the visual survey, the questionnaire survey and the in-depth interview using the Grounded Theory method. The first two surveys comply with the parameters and the measurable indicators that are had been decided for this study (Refer to Table 1). On the other hand the in-depth interview is not guided by any list of queries but the questions revolve on the theme of well-being and community facilities. The interviewer is just being a moderator and the respondent is free to tell their side of the story. The study was undertaken on 8 locations in two cities whereby there are 5 in Shah Alam and 3 in Klang.

Table 1: Examples of Measurable Indicators

PARAMETERS	INDICATORS
COMFORT	•availability of facilities for playing •availability of facilities for interaction
CONVENIENCE	•adequate facilities •good access to facilities •accessibility
SATISFACTION	•provision of adequate facilities •facilities located nearby •accessibility
SAFETY	• maintenance of facilities •design of playing equipment •open drains
FREQUENCY OF USAGE	•Types of facilities

The visual survey of the facilities includes the observation of the condition and location, with the help of a checklist of existing facilities. This is helpful towards understanding the daily activities of the community in that area. Photographs of the facilities and the neighbourhood environment are taken to become evidence of any complaints of the residents on the physical shortcoming of the housing facilities such as the lack of playing equipments, the lack of maintenance of playgrounds, the lack of shops or the lack of social facilities. A survey form was designed for personal interview to acquire the perceptions regarding the satisfaction of the facilities that are available in the two cities. The Likert scale will measure the responses where scores and ratings can be given for example to the perception of satisfaction on certain matters. The sampling methodology used for this research is a combination of both stratified and systematic random sampling. A ten percent (10%) sample of 508 units is found to be the most appropriate size to minimize the sampling error. Furthermore, the sample size is considered large enough to be reasonably confident that it represents the population size. As such a total of 508 questionnaires were systematically distributed. The Statistical Package for the Social

Sciences software processed the data obtained from the questionnaire survey.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results from the observation survey regarding the availability of facilities in all the study locations are shown in Table 2. The scores given are based on the percentage of the availability of facilities in each study location (score 1 for 0% to 39%, score 2 for 40% to 65% and score 3 for 66% to 100%).

Table 2: Scores Given Based On The Percentage Of Availability Of The 15 Types Of Facilities (Within One Km Distance) In The Study Locations

Facilities	Shah Alam		Klang	
	Availability (%)	Scores	Availability (%)	Scores
Kindergarten	100	3	100	3
Primary School	100	3	100	3
Secondary School	80	3	33	1
Children Playground	100	3	66	3
Playing Fields	100	3	0	1
Grocery Shops	100	3	100	3
Mini Markets	100	3	66	3
Food Stalls	100	3	66	3
Restaurants	100	3	66	3
Private Clinics	100	3	66	3
Government Clinics	40	2	0	1
Surau	100	3	100	3
Mosque	80	3	0	1
Community Hall	40	2	0	1
Public Phone	100	3	66	3
Total Scores	43		35	

The total scores given to the availability of facilities within the one kilometer radius of the study locations are seen to be much higher in Shah Alam (43) than in Klang (35). This finding shows that in the context of this study, the low cost flats in Shah Alam have more types of facilities which are located within the 1 kilometer radius when compared to those in Klang. The planned new town of Shah Alam has shown that the neighbourhood concept can provide the community facilities for the

people in the neighbourhood while the low cost flats in Klang are built not according to the neighbourhood concept but either as an ad-hoc planning, infill planning or just as an afterthought.

The results from the opinion and perception survey are shown in Table 3. The table shows the percentage of satisfied respondents on the available facilities in their neighbourhood.

Table 3: Percentage Of Satisfied Respondents On The Community Facilities

Community Facilities	Shah Alam	Klang
	Percentage	
Primary school	80.2	71.2
Private and Government Clinics	87.0	58.6
Secondary school	80.0	65.3
Tadika and kindergarten	79.2	66.0
Grocery shops and mini-markets	69.3	45.7
Surau and mosque	73.4	32.0
Public library	52.7	45.7
Playground and playing fields	60.7	25.5
Community hall	53.2	11.1
Public telephones	65.4	31.4

The results from this survey show that there are more satisfied respondents in Shah Alam than in Klang on all the facilities. Therefore a T-test was done to see the comparison of significant difference of satisfaction towards the facilities provided.

Table 4: T-Test Results Of The Significant Difference Of Satisfaction Towards Some Of The Facilities In The Study Location.

Facilities	City	N	Mean	t-statistics	p-value
<i>Tadika</i>	Shah Alam	324	2.35	1.384	0.008*
	Klang	135	2.28		
Primary School	Shah Alam	330	2.36	0.299	0.261
	Klang	136	2.35		
Secondary School	Shah Alam	324	4.15	1.208	0.015*
	Klang	134	3.99		
Children Playground	Shah Alam	328	3.67	5.914	0.000*
	Klang	136	2.95		
Community Hall	Shah Alam	335	3.48	9.855	0.000*
	Klang	133	2.36		
<i>Surau</i> and Mosque	Shah Alam	302	2.35	3.301	0.000*
	Klang	113	2.15		

* Significant at 5 percent level

Results from t-tests in Table 4 show that there is a significant satisfaction on the *tadika*, secondary school, children playground, community hall, *surau* and mosque between the respondents in Shah Alam and Klang except for the primary school. Based on the mean score the respondents in Shah Alam are more satisfied with the most of the facilities compared to the respondents in Klang. There are less than 50 percent of satisfied respondents in Klang on five facilities and they are the grocery shops, the playgrounds, community hall, public library and the public telephones.

The findings from the Grounded Theory analysis also agree with the t-test results although the respondents do not always categorize their difficulties as problems. The respondents will voice out the problems of lack of playgrounds, lack of choice in their shopping outlets or that the schools are not that close to their houses but they seem to be very forgiving with the situation. They will say that there are some difficulties but they are considered minor problems. Yet on closer observation these problems do cause some inconveniences in their life such as the need to use the public transport to go to the government hospital or to go to school. But one has to understand the background of these respondents

where they used to live in squatter settlements or that they have adapted to live in that sort of condition. Therefore from the Grounded Theory Analysis it can be concluded that the well-being of residents of the low cost flats in Klang is affected but only slightly, by the availability (or unavailability) of community facilities compared to the residents in Shah Alam.

7. CONCLUSIONS

On the whole, a considerable percentage of respondents are quite happy with their low cost flats environment which include the provision of community facilities. Needless to say the location of these flats is relatively accessible to all types of facilities by virtue of their urban location. Yet the findings show that the availability or unavailability of facilities have an effect on the well-being of the residents. The feelings of dissatisfaction with their lack of facilities in their housing environment will decrease their level of well-being. Being in the low income group they have little resources to acquire facilities that are located further away from their homes. With the increase in the price of petrol and other necessities in life, the lower income group rely heavily on facilities located within the compounds of the homes. With this in mind, it is hoped that the policy makers, the local authorities and the planners will not overlook the community needs of the people living in low cost housing.

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